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I Am Navy Medicine: Naval Hospital Bremerton 2015 Jr. Officer of the Quarter Lt. Kathleen Saul, Psychologist

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I am currently assigned to Naval Hospital Bremerton as Staff Psychologist, division officer for Mental Health Clinic, Squadron Psychologist for Commander Submarine Group Nine (COMSUBGRU NINE) and Submarine Development Squadron Five (SUBDEVRON 5).

As a native of Annandale, Virginia and 2004 graduate of Annandale High School, I achieved my Bachelor of Arts from Elon University in 2008 and Doctor of Psychology Degree from George Washington University in 2012.

I started off my military career by applying for the Clinical Psychology internship at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) for the last requirement of my doctoral program. Naval Hospital Bremerton is my first non-training assignment.

During graduate school, I attended trainings at WRNMMC because I knew that I wanted to help veterans suffering from psychological injuries of war. There I met psychologists who worked for the Navy and found out that I could be an active duty psychologist. The more people I met in the Navy Psychology community, the more I knew it was right for me.

I've been stationed at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and during internship I spent a week on the USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77) and a week in Camp Lejeune with 'greenside' Navy Medicine. Of course, it's taken me here to NHB and will soon be taking me on a short ride with a submarine! Next summer it will take me overseas and following that I will be at Lovell Federal Health Center at Great Lakes Training Command.

The positions I have held include staff psychologist, division officer for Mental Health Clinic, Squadron Psychologist for COMSUBGRU NINE and SUBDEVRON 5, Behavioral Health In Primary Care Champion, and Tele-Behavioral Health Coordinator for the emerging Multi-Systems Market (eMSM)

The most inspiring assignment I have had was during internship when a few of us were given the opportunity to help in the large-scale Special Psychiatric Rapid Intervention Team (SPRINT) mission to

the Navy Yard after the horrible shooting. We spent about a week just walking around the offices listening to anyone who wanted to talk and giving education on the best way to take care of each other while recovering from the tragedy. It was so incredible to be a part of such a massive mental health effort to support fellow Sailors and public servants and to be able to work with social workers, psychiatrists, psychiatric technicians, chaplains, and religious program specialists.



The best part of my career is what I am doing right now, working with the submarine fleet. Over the past year, I have had the fortune to develop a relationship with (career submariner) NHB Command Master Chief Randy Pruitt and close the gap between mental health and the submarine fleet. We were working together on some local solutions. Then mental health in submarines started to gain attention at higher levels thanks to the work done addressing deployment issues and offering stress management service to submariners.

Since gaining wider attention, with the support of my colleagues at Mental Health and Undersea Medicine, I have been able to establish the Undersea Mental Health Clinic, co-located with Undersea Medicine. It has been so amazing to be in the right place at the right time to be a part of the first wave of mental health in the submarine fleet.

To sum up my experience with Navy Medicine in one sentence, time and again it has been proven to me that people are the most crucial resource that Navy Medicine has. I have been beyond fortunate to learn from and work with some amazing people.

The most important part of my job is to care about my patients. If you don't have that, you can't accomplish anything else. In my opinion, empathy is a skill, not a character trait, and I strive to keep improving my ability to give compassionate care, even when I have to make some tough, hard-to-hear recommendations to patients and commands.



The work of a staff psychologist helps with our mission priorities. So many parts of military service are gratifying and benefit us. But it'd be a lie to say it also doesn't involve stress, sometimes extreme stress. If we face this as a reality, then there has to be copious tools and resources to help service members cope with that stress and grow from it to become more resilient. Psychology, psychiatry, counselors, and social work all accomplish that mission!

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